



# Graphic geminates as diacritics in the Orrmulum (12th cent.) and in Thomas Sheridan's General Dictionary of the English Language (1780)

Véronique Pouillon

## ► To cite this version:

Véronique Pouillon. Graphic geminates as diacritics in the Orrmulum (12th cent.) and in Thomas Sheridan's General Dictionary of the English Language (1780). Symposium on Historical Phonology, Jan 2014, Edimbourg, United Kingdom. . hal-01378522

**HAL Id: hal-01378522**

**<https://hal-univ-paris.archives-ouvertes.fr/hal-01378522>**

Submitted on 10 Oct 2016

**HAL** is a multi-disciplinary open access archive for the deposit and dissemination of scientific research documents, whether they are published or not. The documents may come from teaching and research institutions in France or abroad, or from public or private research centers.

L'archive ouverte pluridisciplinaire **HAL**, est destinée au dépôt et à la diffusion de documents scientifiques de niveau recherche, publiés ou non, émanant des établissements d'enseignement et de recherche français ou étrangers, des laboratoires publics ou privés.

# Graphic geminates as diacritics in the *Ormmulum* (12<sup>th</sup> cent.) and in Thomas Sheridan's *General Dictionary of the English Language* (1780)

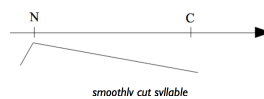
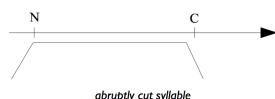
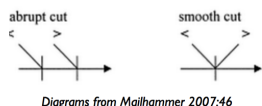
## OR(R)M

Non-etymological geminates in orthography: word-finally and in clusters, sometimes intervocally (including glides)  
<enngli<sup>sh</sup>>, <toged<sup>dd</sup>re>, <bro<sup>pp</sup>err>, <trew<sup>ww</sup>es>

Clearly, these orthographic geminates cannot be interpreted as segmental, like the other alphabetical symbols: they are **diacritics**.

### But what do they indicate?

- double graphs ≠ long consonants (lack of “credible motivation” for gemination, Mailhammer 2007:40)
- For Anderson & Britton 1999 and Mokrowiecki 2012 (among others), only vowel length is at stake – BUT what of the curls and acute accents also used to reflect vowel quantity (though not systematically)? BUT what of “Orrm's didactic purpose and consistency” (Mailhammer 2007:50; cf. *Ormmulum*, l. 103-110)?
- In order for Orrm (as well as a number of his predecessors cf. Mokrowiecki 2012 for thorough account) to generalize the “inherited orthographic-phonological interface” (Murray 1995:132) of OE, sequences containing geminates must have shared “an easily identifiable phonological property” (Murray 2000:636), necessarily a suprasegmental feature: syllable structure, syllable weight or syllable cut, which predicts a different “prosodic energy contour” for abruptly or smoothly cut syllables (Mailhammer 2007:46).



☞ Sheridan's intuition of syllable-cut prosody may be reflected in his theory of “accent” whereby “dwelling upon the vowel” vs. “passing rapidly over the vowel” confers length to syllable itself. (Sheridan 1780:40)

	Late Old English/Early Mid. Eng.	Early Mid. E. (Orrm)	Middle English	Late Mod. English (Sheridan)
SMOOTH CUT	(Quantity-based distinction maintained in open syllables) Homorganic Cluster Lengthening	CV or CV: CV:C	Open Syllable Lengthening	CV: CV:C
ABRUPT CUT	Closed Syllable Shortening	CVC	–	CVC

## Conclusion

In both cases, vowel length cannot be the only justification for the representation; it is apparent that the representations refer to the syllabic configuration of their dialects: syllable-cut prosody accounts for the diacritic use of geminates in both Orrm's and Sheridan's systems.

## References

- ANDERSON, John & BRITTON, Derek (1999) “The orthography and phonology of the *Ormmulum*”, *English Language and Linguistics* 3/2, 299-334.  
HAMMOND, Michael (1997) “Vowel quantity and syllabification in English”, *Language*, 1-17.  
HOLT, Robert, ed. (1878). *The Ormmulum*. (2 vols.) (With the notes and glossary of Dr. Robert M. White.) Oxford: Clarendon Press.  
MAILHAMMER, Robert (2007) “On syllable cut in the *Ormmulum*”, in Cain & Russon (eds.), *Studies in the History of the English Language III: Managing Chaos*, Mouton de Gruyter, 37-61.  
MOKROWIECKI, Tomasz (2012) “Reduplication of consonant graphemes in the *Ormmulum* in the light of late old English scribal evidence”, *Studia Anglica Posnaniensia* 47/4.  
MURRAY, Robert (1995) “Orrm's phonological-graphic interface and quantity in Early Middle English”, in Fix (ed.), *Quantitätsproblematik und Metrik: Greifswalder Symposium zur germanischen Grammatik*, *Amsterdamer Beiträge zur Älteren Germanistik* 42, special volume, 125-147.  
MURRAY, Robert (2000) “Syllable cut prosody in Early Middle English”, *Language* 76/3: 617-654.  
POUILLON, Véronique & BALLIER, Nicolas (2013) “The treatment of syllables and syllable boundaries in Thomas Sheridan's English pronouncing dictionary of 1780”, paper presented at “La Silaba”, April 11th, Pescara.  
SCRAGG, Donald (1974). *A History of English Spelling*, Manchester: Manchester University Press.  
SHERIDAN, Thomas (1780). *A General Dictionary of the English Language*, London.